

NOTES FROM THE

Chief for Enlisted Matters

by CMSgt Lorraine A. Tanner, DSN 224-5437



Before I begin my article, I want to thank each of you for your support, hard work, and commitment to our country, the Air Force, and Financial Management. I have been honored to serve with you and will be forever grateful for the gifts of life you have shared with me. It is with great confidence I turn over the management of the Financial Management enlisted force to CMSgt Larry Gonzales. I wish you all well and will remember you fondly.

I've spent a lot of time thinking what message I want to send as I retire. It has been difficult to narrow it down to one page.

Last weekend I went on a long run. I had a 16-mile goal to hit on Sunday. My daughter and I are training for the Air Force Marathon. If our training is successful, we look forward to completing our first marathon. As we prepare for this event, I find myself comparing my marathon training to my career.

When I first starting running, it was a slow, laborious process. I listened to those who were obsessed with the sport and tried to emulate their styles or strategies. My achievements were small. I was ecstatic running for five straight minutes. Then one mile passed under my shoes and finally I hit the big target of three miles. I never thought I could run more than three miles. It was a glass ceiling I built for myself.

My first enlistment was similar. I began by filing documents in pay records. When I finished my CDCs, I was allowed to work the in- and out-processing counter. When I reached the established levels of performance I was selected to work the Military Pay Inquires Counter. I remember trying easier and better ways to help our customers. I wanted to learn all I could about military pay and the operation, so I could do my job well. I never looked beyond that goal to find out how much further I could go or how much more I could offer the Air Force.

Then one day I went for a run. I had so much on my mind that I needed to work through. Before I knew it, I had run five miles! With that small feat, I realized I was in control. I could, through training, focus, and goal setting, do anything I set my mind to. I ran further and faster. I participated in other activities—I swam, worked with weights, biked, and played volleyball and softball. My runs kept getting better and better. By the time I finished the Senior NCO Academy (as a Master

Sergeant) I was running 60 mile weeks and enjoying every minute of it.

My NCO years were a lot like that too. I was selected for Staff Sergeant with less than four years on active duty. I saw so many opportunities. The more I learned, the better NCO I became. In fact, the more responsibility I got, the more I wanted—the more I gave to the Air Force, the more it gave back to me. My family made many sacrifices. I made some poor decisions and at times felt myself going backwards instead of forward. But all in all, those years were awesome and I was on top of my game when I received my promotion to Master Sergeant.

Things started to change. Injuries were taking longer to heal and miles were taking longer to run. Other demands on my time began taking their toll and my total weekly mileage was cut in half. I began to focus less on miles and speed and more on the run itself. I enjoyed my runs a lot more. I heard the birds sing and could smell the flowers as I ran through the park. I began working with kids and enjoyed passing on training tips and war stories. I liked cheering them on and giving them hope. I stopped wearing a watch to time my miles and just ran until I felt like stopping. I would set new goals and continue to try to excel in my new style. At least once a week I would push myself a little harder, just to keep the edge.

I work hard but still take the time to smell the roses. I am as grateful for the little and big things in life. I still want to know everything and I want to make a difference. I want to pass on my experiences and advice.

So, as I leave the Air Force I want you to know that a career is a growing process. Every phase will be different for each of us—learn from them and you will become a strong leader in financial management and the Air Force. Take things a step at a time and don't place unnecessary limitations on yourself. If you say you can't do something, you won't. Take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way. Those opportunities will help you grow and become stronger. Work hard and be honest. Remember everyone makes mistakes, learn from them, take your whooping, and go on. And finally, pass on your experience to those behind you. You will enjoy it and so will they. Learn to enjoy life and recognize there is a balance. Please, try to make a difference each and every day.